

# SICHA SUMMARY

## Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 27

*Vayikra, Sicha 1*

### The Rambam:

After providing detailed instructions for the steps of the Seder, Rambam concludes:

“It is permissible to mix a fifth cup and recite upon it "the great Hallel" - i.e., from "Give thanks to God, for He is good" until "By the rivers of Babylon." This cup is not an obligation like the other cups.” (*Laws of Chametz and Matzah*, 8:10)

### The Question:

There are divergent ways to understand the classification of the fifth cup:

1. The fifth cup is entirely optional, it has no obligation or recommendation attached to it (*Rabbeinu Manoach*)
2. The fifth cup is not obligatory but it is an enhancement of the mitzvah of drinking wine on the Seder night. (*Ran*)

Rambam’s position does not align with either of these options. On the one hand, he says, “it is permissible...” which implies that he sees the fifth cup as an entirely optional, mundane drinking. Yet he

concludes, “this cup is not an obligation like the other cups,” which implies that it does have some level of obligation, just not that of the four mandated cups. And yet, if Rambam maintained that the fifth cup was the ideal form of the mitzvah (like the *Ran*) he would have said so clearly. Instead, he only says it is not as obligated as the four cups.

If Rambam does not align with either definition of the fifth cup, what is his position?

### The Explanation:

The source for the fifth cup is a statement by the Tanna Rabbi Tarfon. Rambam understands that Rabbi Tarfon disagrees with the sages who maintain that the obligation on the Seder night is to consume four cups; he says a fifth cup is also obligated. Rambam wants to accommodate both views, so he rules that the fifth cup should be poured. But he cannot rule that it is drunk as well, because the law is decided in favor of the majority, and the sages maintain that after the four cups, nothing other than water is to be drunk. To follow Rabbi Tarfon completely would invalidate the law of the sages. Therefore Rambam reaches the creative conclusion that the

fifth cup is to be poured but not consumed. What value is there to pouring a cup and not drinking it? Rambam continues, “recite upon it the great Hallel,” if you use the cup as an occasion to recite prayer over it, it has halachic value even if it is not drunk.

### **An Alternative Explanation:**

Alternatively, Rambam sees Rabbi Tarfon as not arguing with the sages, but supplementing their position by mandating that an extra cup be poured but not consumed. In this understanding, the fifth cup is of an entirely different classification than the first four. The four cups are drunk, and have blessings recited over them, the fifth is not drunk, and only has passages of praise recited over it, not a blessing.

The language of Rambam in this law, translated as, “it is permissible,” can actually also be read as “one should.” Thus, we can read this to convey an obligation, one is mandated to pour a fifth cup and not drink it. Yet, Rambam clarifies, “this cup is not an obligation like the other cups,” he does not mean to say that this cup is not obligated, it is, it just belongs to a different category than the four cups.

### **Eliyahu’s Cup:**

The cup we pour as Eliyahu’s cup is not the fifth cup under discussion. The fifth cup was one that was poured individually, Eliyahu’s cup is poured once for the entire assembly.

In spiritual terms we can suggest the following:

A fifth cup implies a continuum from the previous four, in other words, a Divine response to the methodical efforts of human beings to draw closer to G-d. This cup is not drunk, meaning, it is a lofty Divine revelation that cannot be “consumed” by the individual, but it is still earned through toil and effort. The earlier generations who discussed this practice and evidently fulfilled it were able to achieve a certain kind of completion in their Divine service, and so were able to pour the fifth cup. In our generation, we do not achieve perfection or completion in our Divine service, so it is not our practice to pour the fifth cup. But we do have an innate faith in the coming of Moshiach, therefore we pour the cup of Eliyahu, which alludes to the “undrinkable” revelation of Moshiach that far transcends whatever vessels our efforts can construct.

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